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FAR EAST

3. Comment on Communist reply to Thimayya's "turn-back" plan:

The Communist reply of 19 January to General Thimayya's plan to turn back the prisoners to the detaining sides on 20 January appears to be an effort to induce Nehru to change his mind at the last minute.

The statement demands that Thimayya abandon his plan and that Indian troops retain custody of the prisoners until the Communists have made "explanations" to their satisfaction and until a Korean political conference has settled the prisoners' fate. It concludes with a Communist offer to send troops into the neutral zone if the Indians request it, as a guarantee against possible South Korean intrusions or prisoner violence. It suggests that troops will not be sent unless invited.

The reply seems designed to capitalize on the NNRC majority report assigning to the UN Command primary responsibility for the failure of the "explanations," the Indian recommendation that the prisoners be held by the two commands until a Korean conference meets, and the Indian fear of a South Korean effort to free the prisoners if they continue in Indian custody. Thimayya's immediate response was to reaffirm his intention to turn back the prisoners "on schedule," and it seems probable that Nehru will not interfere with the operation.

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

4. Comment on situation at Dien Bien Phu:

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[REDACTED] A comparison of Viet Minh dispositions at Dien Bien Phu on 16 January with those of the previous week shows that the enemy has tightened his encirclement of the French garrison there. About 17 enemy battalions now surround the French defensive position. The French still do not know whether an additional six to nine battalions of an approaching force have reached the Dien Bien Phu area, although elements are reported in the vicinity. No recent information is available on the two enemy artillery regiments reported moving westward from the delta area in late December.

According to the American army attaché in Saigon, the enemy is now making close-in reconnaissance and the French are certain that local deserters have given the Viet Minh complete details on the Dien Bien Phu defenses. [REDACTED]

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NEAR EAST - AFRICA

6. Saudi Arabia rejects US military grant aid agreement:

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King Saud has rejected the latest draft of a US military grant aid agreement offered him because of the new obligations he believes Saudi Arabia would have to assume. The acting foreign minister told Ambassador Wadsworth that the real reason for the rejection was the king's fear that his country would come under American control "both in economic and military fields."

Wadsworth believes that Saud was influenced by nationalistic advisers as well as by fear of criticism from other Arab states at a time when rumors regarding the formation of a US-supported Middle East defense pact are current.

Comment: Saudi Arabia, which has long been interested in receiving US military assistance, was in June 1953 the first Arab country to be offered grant aid. Since then, the Saudis have indicated fear that certain provisions required by American legislation would infringe on their sovereignty.

7. Paris objects to Madrid's Moroccan policy:

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According to French representations made in Washington, Paris, and Rabat, Moroccan leaders meeting in Tetuan on 20 or 21 January will publicly proclaim nonrecognition of the present sultan, autonomy of Spanish Morocco, and collective allegiance to Spain.

The French maintain that such a development, which they charge is being instigated by the Spanish high commissioner, would incite further terrorism and anarchy in all of Morocco and would severely strain French-Spanish relations.

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Comment: It is unlikely that Spain would seek the secession of Spanish Morocco from the sultanate. Current Spanish activities in Morocco are probably intended to enlist Arab friendship and at the same time harass the French.

France hopes to use this situation to enlist American support for its policies in this area.

LATIN AMERICA

8. Cuban revolution reportedly scheduled for 20 January:

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[redacted] has stated that a revolution against the government of President Batista will take place on 20 January. Necessary aircraft are being made ready in Mexico, according to [redacted]

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Comment: No Cuban revolutionary group appears able to muster a force capable of defeating the Cuban armed forces, which number nearly 35,000. The American army attaché in Havana reported on 1 December 1953 that the armed forces are believed essentially loyal to Batista.

The best information available on the strength of revolutionary groups indicates that only some small arms have been smuggled into Cuba, that several anti-Batista leaders could be hiding within the country, and that they own privately some half a dozen small private planes.

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